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§ 2.5 How should you describe the records you seek?

(a) You must reasonably describe the records sought. A reasonable description contains sufficient detail to enable bureau personnel familiar with the subject matter of the request to locate the records with a reasonable amount of effort.

(b) You should include as much detail as possible about the specific records or types of records that you are seeking. This will assist the bureau in identifying the requested records (for example, time frames involved or specific personnel who may have the requested records). For example, whenever possible, identify:

(1) The date, title or name, author, recipient, and subject of any particular records you seek;

(2) The office that created the records you seek;

(3) The timeframe for which you are seeking records; and

(4) Any other information that will assist the bureau in locating the records.

(c) The bureau's FOIA Public Liaison can assist you in formulating or reformulating a request in an effort to better identify the records you seek.

(d) If the request does not reasonably describe the records sought, the bureau will inform you what additional information is needed. It will also notify you that it will not be able to comply with your FOIA request unless you provide the additional information requested within 20 workdays. If you receive this sort of response, you may wish to discuss it with the bureau's designated FOIA contact or its FOIA Public Liaison (see § 2.66 of this part). If the bureau does not receive a written response within 20 workdays after asking for additional information, it will presume that you are no longer interested in the records and will close the file on the request.

[77 FR 76902, Dec. 31, 2012; 78 FR 6216, Jan. 30, 2013]

§ 2.6 How will fee information affect the processing of your request?

(a) Your request must explicitly state that you will pay all fees associated with processing the request, that you will pay fees up to a specified

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amount, and/or that you are seeking a fee waiver.

(b) If the bureau anticipates that the fees for processing the request will exceed the amount you have agreed to pay, or if you did not agree in writing to pay processing fees and the bureau anticipates the processing costs will exceed your entitlements, the bureau will notify you:

(1) Of the estimated processing fees;

(2) Of its need for either an advance payment (see § 2.50 of this part) or your written assurance that you will pay the anticipated fees (or fees up to a specified amount); and

(3) That it will not be able to fully comply with your FOIA request unless you provide the written assurance or advance payment requested.

(c) If the bureau does not receive a written response from you within 20 workdays after requesting the information in paragraph (b) of this section, it will presume that you are no longer interested in the records and will close the file on the request.

(d) If you are seeking a fee waiver, your request must include sufficient justification (see the criteria in §§ 2.45, 2.48, and 2.56 of this part). Failure to provide sufficient justification will result in a denial of the fee waiver request. If you are seeking a fee waiver, you may also indicate the amount you are willing to pay if the fee waiver is denied. This allows the bureau to process the request for records while it considers your fee waiver request.

(e) The bureau will begin processing the request only after the fee issues are resolved.

(f) If you are required to pay a fee and it is later determined on appeal that you were entitled to a full or partial fee waiver, you will receive an appropriate refund.

§ 2.7 What information should you include about your fee category?

(a) A request should indicate your fee category (that is, whether you are a commercial-use requester, news media, educational or noncommercial scientific institution, or other requester as described in §§ 2.38 and 2.39 of this part).

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(b) If you submit a FOIA request on behalf of another person or organization (for example, if you are an attorney submitting a request on behalf of a client), the bureau will determine the fee category by considering the underlying requester's identity and intended use of the information.

(c) If your fee category is unclear, the bureau may ask you for additional information (see § 2.51 of this part).

§ 2.8 Can you ask for records to be disclosed in a particular form or format?

(a) Generally, you may choose the form or format of disclosure for records requested. The bureau must provide the records in the requested form or format if the bureau can readily reproduce the record in that form or format.

(b) The bureau may charge you the direct costs involved in converting records to the requested format if the bureau does not normally maintain the records in that format (see § 2.44 of this part).

§ 2.9 What if your request seeks records about another person?

(a) When a request seeks records about another person, you may receive greater access by submitting proof that the person either:

(1) Consents to the release of the records to you (for example, a notarized authorization signed by that person); or

(2) Is deceased (for example, a copy of a death certificate or an obituary).

(b) At its discretion, the bureau can require you to supply additional information if necessary to verify that a particular person has consented to disclosure or is deceased.

§ 2.10 May you ask for the processing of your request to be expedited?

You may ask for the processing of your request to be expedited. The bureau will determine whether to expedite the processing of your request using the criteria outlined in § 2.20.

§ 2.11 What contact information should your request include?

A request should include your name, mailing address, daytime telephone number (or the name and telephone

number of an appropriate contact), email address, and fax number (if available) in case the bureau needs additional information or clarification of your request.

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SOURCE: 77 FR 76902, Dec. 31, 2012, unless otherwise noted.

§ 2.12 What should you know about how bureaus process requests?

(a) Except as described in §§ 2.4 and 2.13 of this part, the bureau to which the request is addressed is responsible for responding to the request and for making a reasonable effort to search for responsive records.

(b) In determining which records are responsive to a request, the bureau will include only records in its possession and control on the date that it begins its search.

(c) The bureau will make reasonable efforts to search for the requested records in electronic form or format, except when these efforts would significantly interfere with the operation of the bureau's automated information system.

(d) If a bureau receives a request for records in its possession that it did not create or that another bureau or a Federal agency is substantially concerned with, it may undertake consultations and/or referrals as described in § 2.13.

§ 2.13 How do consultations and referrals work?

(a) Consultations and referrals can occur within the Department or outside the Department.

(1) Paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section addresses consultations and referrals that occur within the Department when the bureau has responsive records.

(2) Paragraphs (d) through (g) of this section address consultations and referrals that occur outside the Department when the bureau has responsive records.

(3) Paragraph (h) of this section addresses what happens when the bureau has no responsive records but believes responsive records may be in the possession of a Federal agency outside the Department.